

EU BORDER REGIONS

EU EXTERNAL BORDERS AND THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURS.
ANALYSING REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS
THROUGH POLICIES & PRACTICES OF
CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Project Funding



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New Year's Message from EUBORDERREGIONS



If 2011 is anything to go by, 2012 promises to be a tumultuous year in economic, political and social terms. Much of our attention will be directed towards Europe and the troubles of the Eurozone, but the shifts that are taking place are obviously of international importance and touch all corners of the globe. Traditional politics "as usual" might not be enough to guide us through the creative, complex but often frightening unruliness that is our contemporary world. Part of the *raison d'être* of EUBORDERREGIONS is the proposition that co-operation, dialogue and openness are still our main resources for social and economic development and dealing with the challenges of diversity.

During 2012, this project will explore the potentials of local development strategies based on economic, social and political networking beyond the EU's formidable external frontiers. Although somewhat drowned out by political messages of fear and controlled borders, local diplomacy has a long and important history of creating intercultural dialogue. We here at EUBORDERREGIONS hope for a productive and progressive 2012, both in more global terms as well as for all of us individually. Stay tuned to this website for up-to-date information from fascinating borderlands "on the edge" of our greater regional Neighbourhood!

Yours,

James Scott

INSIDE THE NEWSLETTER:

Status of the project, WP activities overview (Pages 2-3)

Profile of Russian-Finnish Border Region (Page 4)

Profile of Estonian-Russian Border Region (Page 5)

Profile of Polish-Ukrainian Border Region (Page 6)

Profile of Italian-Tunisian Border Region (Page 7)

Xavier Ferrier-Gallardo's article "On Islam and European identity" published in December edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Page 8-9)

Upcoming events (Page 10).

EUBORDERREGIONS II Workshop was held in Vienna

The EUBORDERREGIONS Workshop 2 was held in Vienna (Austria) on October 21-22, 2011, attended by the representatives of all 14 partner organisations. During the two-day meeting, the progress of the Workpackage (WP) 2 (Geopolitical Data, WP 3 (Socio-Economic data), WP 4 (Empirical Template), WP 5 (Case Studies), WP9 (Dissemination) as well as several administrative and financial issues.

Next workshop will take place on May 8-10, 2012 in Budapest, organised by Hungarian project partner TARKI- Social Science Research Institute.



Status of the project:

The project work is divided into a major theoretical and methodological element (WP 1), five main research (RTD) workpackages (WP 2-6), an RTD workpackage for actual fieldwork implementation (WP7), a training package for fieldwork (WP 8) and separate workpackages for policy options deriving from our research as well as dissemination activities (WP 9) and management (WP 10).

WP1 "State of debate: theories and methods of complex regional analysis"

Main activities are defining scope and select case study areas, characterising the current state of scholarly debate, policy research and analytical tools, summarising insights and arguments that have emerged as a result of research, preparing a Final Project Report.

In the workshop in Vienna the consortium has agreed on the following case studies:

1. NOR-RU (Kirkenes-Murmansk Oblast)
2. SE-NOR (Kiruna-Narvik)
3. FIN-RUS (SE Finland-Leningrad Oblast: Kotka-Lappeenranta-Vyborg-St. Petersburg)
4. EST-RUS (Narva-Ivangorod; Tartu-Pskov)
5. POL-UKR (Przemysl- Sambor)
6. HUN-UKR (Ungvár-Nyíregyháza-Beregszász)
7. ROM-UKR-MOL (Iasi-Chernivtsi-Chisinau)
8. TR-BG (Kirkclareli-Burgas)
9. GR-TR (E. Macedonia/Thrace-Edirne)
10. E-MOR (Straits of Gibraltar)
11. I-TUN (Straits of Sicily with a focus on Trapani (IT) and Bizerte (TUN))

About researches read under WP 2,3,4,5.

WP2 "Regional dimensions of Change 1: Geopolitical data"

WP2 – "Geopolitical Data" is mainly managed by CeSPI – Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale of Rome and Sapienza University of Rome, with the collaboration of UEF (Finland), UIT (Norway), Nordregio (Sweden), UAB (Spain), METU (Turkey), CISR (Russian Federation) and IRS (Germany).

The first product of the WP2 - Project Empirical Database –was delivered in December. The empirical database includes geo-economic, socio-economic and political data, which are relevant in relation to a variety of geopolitical issues regarding EU, EU's Member States and their relations with EU neighbor countries.

The contents of the database are classified and available according to the data format (Country Data, Relational Data, Hot Spots, Regions, Routes) and according to the information domain (Border issues, Economy, Infrastructures, International cooperation,

Migration, Military, Politics).

The specific objectives of the database are following:

- To contribute with relevant, exhaustive and updated information to the research to be conducted within the entire EUBORDERREGIONS project;
- To allow immediate comparison among different issues and different countries;
- To assist in the identification of the main issues that affect the European Neighbourhood Policy and cross-border relations across the EU's external frontier, including the selection of case studies to be conducted within the project;
- To provide data and information that will be further elaborated and interpreted in the framework of WP 2, as a support material to the analysis and presentation of the main geopolitical issues which affect cross-border relations across the EU's external border.

According the work plan, WP2 Mid-term scientific report will be delivered by June 2012.

WP3 "Socio-economic data"

WP 3 is managed by Institute for Advanced Studies (Austria). WP3 tasks include regional benchmarking and the analysis of socio-economic development patterns in the EU peripheral border regions within mesoregional contexts. The NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 levels are the main focus. 11 data topics have been selected and developed and these include: market size, demographics, GDP/income data, migration, infrastructure, national accounts, tourism data, transport (air, maritime, road), education indicators, etc.

WP4 "Regional dimensions of Change 2: Design for fieldwork"

WP 4 tasks include developing, refining and operationalising central research questions, final designation of method-mix for case studies, guidelines for fieldwork. WP is managed by TARKI Social Science Research Institute (Hungary).

The consortium has decided to put less emphasis on standardized questionnaires and more on in-depth interviews but with an inclusion of 'network analysis'. This is being done in order to consolidate resources and enhance impacts of fieldwork.

- **Mapping** underway in all case study regions and has resulted in the choice of concrete case study areas (urban networks). It is also decided that visualization elements (social network analysis in particular) are an important preliminary step and should be incorporated into the standardized questionnaire. This will serve as

compensation for the reduction of the overall number of standardized questionnaires.

- **Observation** (on land border-crossings) that help identify gaps between the different sides level at least NUTS 3 level if not more local. Gaps signify distance between neighbours.
- **Standardized questionnaires** mapping has shown that the target of 300 per case study is not realistic for several case study areas (e.g. NOR-RUS, TR-GR, PL-UKR) and should not be taken as a minimum standard for all partners. Instead, in all, we will target 75-100 for each side.
- **In-depth interviews.**
- **Observation:** this would involve fieldwork of 4 separate weeks during a calendar year and 4 observers.
- **Media analysis** e.g. home pages of municipalities, firms in the area, local media.

WP 4 discussion included the spheres of the fieldwork, the template and concrete research questions:

The spheres of the fieldwork

“Mapping” (an inventory of actors)	Narrow (in general case study areas)	Identifying key players within the three stakeholder groups; reviewing documents, websites and literature relating to issues and specific areas
Observation	Narrow (around four border crossing points)	Border-crossings and neighbouring settlements (with a special focus on twin cities and their vicinity) on the two sides of the border
Questionnaires	Wider	The LAU1 regions closest to the border section observed
In-depth interview	Wider	The NUTS3 region closest to the border observed and any other actor relevant in EU Neighborhood Policy
Content analysis	Wider	Home pages of the settlements and firms in the NUTS3 region and the regional (county-level) on-line media
Stakeholder Forums	Wider	<i>(Participants to be selected at a later stage, after survey, interviews)</i>

WP5 “Case-studies”

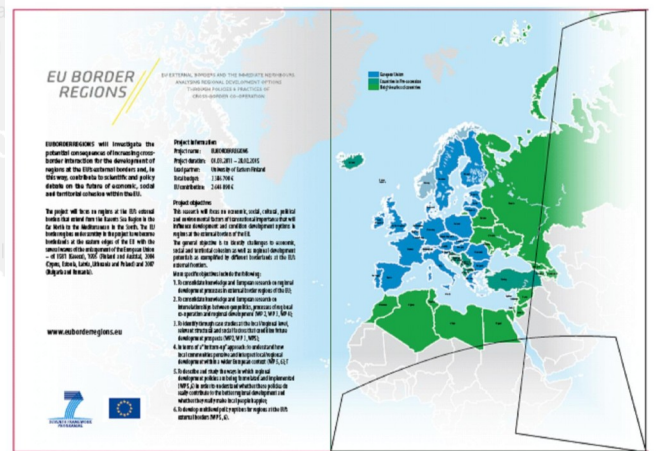
11 case studies have been chosen. The work of WP will strive to produce typologies (for example, regarding local and cross-border governance forms and perceptions of regional development potentials) and visualizations (social network analysis). Descriptions are available on www.euborderregions.eu and will be introduced in project newsletters also.

WP 6,7,8

Work packages activities have not started yet.

WP9 “Dissemination”

WP is managed by Peipsi CTC (Estonia) in cooperation of all partners. Project website www.euborderregions.eu and social media (Facebook, Twitter) are implemented and updated regularly. Project flyers were produced and distributed. Pdf-versions are available also on project web-



site as well as published newsletters, document templates and other information about the project.

WP10 “Management”

WP is managed by University of Eastern Finland.

Next Workshop 3 and the Conference will take place in Budapest (8-13 May 2012).

Next deliverables:

- * Training Manual (April 2012)
- * Working Papers 1 (April 2012)
- * Project Conference 1 (May 2012)
- * Reporting in Month 18.

Border Regions

The five regional contexts that connect the EU with its immediate neighbourhood will be the focus of work in EUBORDERREGIONS project:

- Northeastern Europe / the Barents Sea Region
- Baltic Sea basin,
- Eastern Dimensions: e.g. Poland/Hungary-Ukraine, Romania-Moldova
- South-Eastern Europe / the Black Sea basin.
- The Euro-Mediterranean context: Southern Italian and Spanish regions

All chosen case-study areas will be introduced in newsletters during the project. In the newsletter 2 four of them will be described.

Profile of the Finnish-Russian Border Region

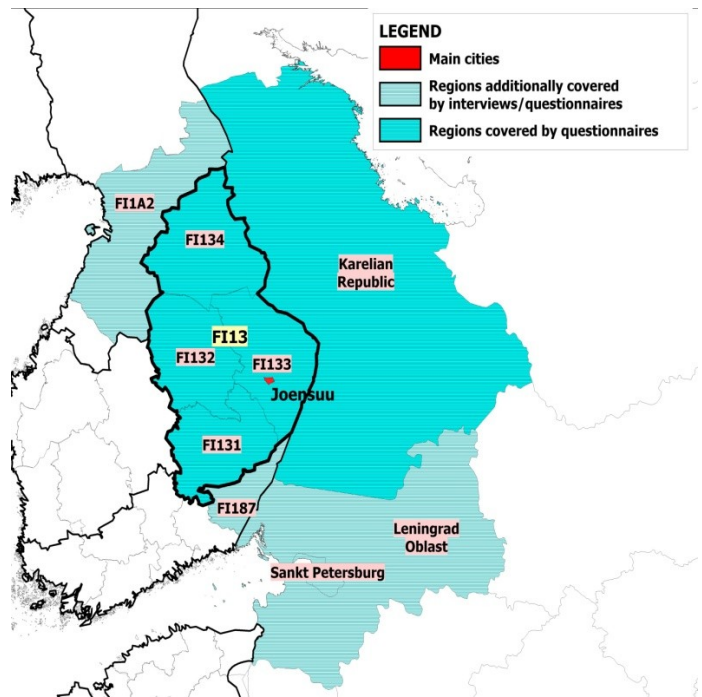
James Scott

The overall Finnish-Russian border region is vast in size. In terms of European administrative jargon, it covers the entire NUTS 2 region of Eastern Finland (FI13) as well as two further NUTS3 regions (South Karelia and Northern Ostrobothnia). The adjacent Russian regions under study are the Karelian Republic, Leningrad Oblast' and St. Petersburg. In total, the case study area encompasses more than 258,000



km². About half of the total length of the EU external border between Finland and Russia runs here mostly through uninhabited taiga forests and low-density rural areas. The case study area in general is very sparsely populated and covered in forests; the main exception is the metropolis of St. Petersburg (4.6 million), about 150 km from the border.

Eastern Finland is an excellent example of a region that has suffered from proximity to closed borders. Its economic profile and settlement structure have been dominated by the forestry sector. Even though



the employment in forestry has declined during the last decades, the pattern is still visible in the industrial makeup of the area: the share of the primary sector is considerably above the national average, especially in the northern part of the border region, whereas the south-eastern territories rely on heavy industries, in which paper and pulp production plays a major role.

At the sub-regional level, the main differences follow the urban/rural division. Although the change of border regime after the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in positive anticipations in the early 1990s, the expectations of economic growth and structural renewal only materialised to a limited degree.

GDP per capita in Eastern Finland is only 75% of the national average. A common feature of the border region is that of de-population, especially due to out-migration towards the Helsinki area on the Finnish side and to St. Petersburg on the Russian side. Rural municipalities are depopulating; within the case study area, the few exceptions are regional capitals that attract migrants from their rural hinterlands. Eastern Finland is the only region within the country forecasted



Of course, future development potentials for the Finnish-Russian border region will depend on an ability to take greater advantage of cross-border flows. This, in turn, will also depend on a greater degree of cross-border mobility. The opening of the border, most importantly in the form of new crossing points, has facilitated a rapid increase in the total volume of cross-border traffic.

There are nine international border crossing points on the Finnish-Russian border. When compared to the length of the border (approx. 1300km), however, it is clear that, particularly in the northern parts, border crossing points are few and far between. According to the Finnish Border Guard, the total amount of annual border crossings grew from 0.99 million in 1990 to 5.6 million in 2000, and then to near 8.4 million in 2010. About a third of this traffic goes through the busiest crossing point at Vaalimaa-Torfyanovka (to St. Petersburg and Vyborg).

The main transport links between Finland and Russia pass through the southern section of the border (in the Southeast Finland – Russia Interreg A programme region), also acting as the primary connections from Scandinavia to Russia via Finland. The busiest crossing points and those dealing with the largest volumes of goods are also here; the southern corridor is also part of the EU's TEN-T Nordic triangle railway/road axis.

Profile of the Estonian-Russian Border Region

Elena Nikiforova, Margit Säre

Estonia shares with Russia a border line of total length of 460,6 km. 122,0 km of the border (26 %) goes through the sea; 200,6 km (or 49,3%) through large surface water bodies, including Lake Peipsi/Chudskoe and Narva River; and 138 km on land (29,9%). Lake



Peipsi is the biggest transboundary lake in Europe of which 44% belongs to Estonia and 56% to Russia. The Estonian – Russian border area is mostly rural area with total population of under one million people.

The study will be carried out in two transborder networks, to the North and to the South from the Lake Peipsi/Chudskoe. The first case study is the transborder network of two cities, Narva in Estonia and Ivangorod in Russia and the second is transborder area called Setomaa between towns Tartu and Pskov.

Narva and Ivangorod are two cities situated on opposite sides of the river Narva. Narva is the third biggest town in Estonia with a population of 67,000 inhabitants, 93% of whom are Russian speakers. Ivangorod, on its part, has over 11,000 inhabitants. For the most part of its existence Ivangorod had been a district of Narva linked to Narva proper by a few bridges. Both cities had historically been the



battle field for the Protestant world and Orthodox Russia, struggling for influence in the region, and had been passed from hands to hands several times, being a part of Swedish Kingdom and the Russian Empire. In 1920 Estonia became independent for the first time in its history.

Ivangorod as a part of Narva entered the territory of independent Estonia. However, in twenty years, following the annexation of Estonia by the Soviet Union and the Second World War, the borders in the region were redrawn again, locating Narva in the Estonian Soviet Republic and Ivangorod on the Russian side of the republican divide. For several Soviet decades this division meant mostly differences in economic supplies, as Estonia enjoyed better food and goods provision than Russia; some people also reflect upon the existence of a cultural boundary that one 'could feel' having crossed the bridge. Nonetheless, belonging *de jure* to different administrative entities, *de facto* Narva and Ivangorod functioned as one city with common infrastructure, labour market and dwelling and other opportunities. Many people lived in Ivangorod and worked on the other side of the bridge and vice versa, some had their summer cottages (dachas) and land plots on the opposite bank of the river.

In 1991 Estonia regained its independence, and the previously republican border became the border of two independent states Estonia and Russia, and later the external border of the European Union. For Narva and Ivangorod the emergence and strengthening of the border meant severe disruption of connections at all possible levels, from urban infrastructure, such as sewage and water supply, to family networks. Common labour market was also destroyed due to the establishment of strict border and visa regime between the two states and, therefore, two cities. Moreover, in the beginning of the 1990s many industries were shut down or started to shrink. As a result of these changes, in the 1990s both cities slipped in economic recession and have not fully recovered ever since.

“Setomaa”

Although located on a distance of 50-60 km from the border, Tartu (Estonia) and Pskov (Russia) are important towns for this research since they function as two centers of gravitation for a vast transborder region of the lake Peipsi and rural areas to the South from the lake. While the area to the North from the lake is characterized by industrialization and urbanization, the territories around the lake and to the South from it have traditionally been the lands of agriculture and fishery. Through centuries and up until now the lake Peipsi/Chudskoe region has been the meeting point of different cultures and religions.



On the Estonian side, there are Estonians, Russians, Seto and Russian old-believers sharing the territory.

Russian old-believers lead their history from resettlers who escaped from Orthodox persecution in Russia at the end of the 17th century. Today, this community numbers about two thousand people, living in coastal villages by the lake. These people have been successful in retaining their lifestyle and religion up to date notwithstanding changes of times and political powers.

Another particularity of the region is the transborder cultural group of Setos that occupies the southern

part of the border area. Now, this community counts about 4000 people, with only 100 people living on the Russian side of the border. Setos differ from Estonians by the Orthodox religion with elements of Paganism, and speak their own Seto dialect, close but not identical to Estonian. Among the Seto community, the traditional area of Seto settlements has got the name of Setomaa, ‘the land of Setos’, and Petserimaa, ‘the land of Petseri’ (Pechory in Estonian).

Profile of the Polish-Ukrainian Border region

Tymoteusz Wronka

The area of Polish-Ukrainian borderland has a peripheral characteristics. In terms of European administrative jargon, It covers two NUTS2 regions in Poland: Lubelskie Voivodeship and Subcarpathian Voivodeship. On the Ukrainian side there are three border regions: Volyn Oblast, Lviv Oblast and Zakarpattia Oblast.



Polish and Ukrainian border regions are among the least economically developed regions of the country (GDP per capita is about 70% of the national average). Polish border regions maintain their position (mainly through the development of large urban centers), but Ukrainian border regions lose their distance to other regions of the country despite the existence of a large urban center (Lviv). Economic structure of the area indicates low competitiveness of border regions, which is due to large share of inefficient economic sectors (agriculture, low-innovative industry). Moreover structural changes are taking place very slowly.

Border regions are not attractive location for investment (including foreign investments). Furthermore level of innovativeness and technological advancement of enterprises remains low among others because of low investment in research and development. Poorly developed technical infrastructure especially in transport (mainly in quality) is not favorable for economic growth; its development rate should be also considered as an inadequate. A common feature of the border region is that of negative net migration.

The border between Poland and Ukraine has 535 km. In the northern and central parts it runs through plain lands along Bug river, but its southern section has a much more mountainous nature.

There are twelve border crossings points - six road and six rail - and next four border crossings are planned or under development. Key crossing points (Korczowa - Krakowiec, Medyna - Szeginie) are located near Przemysl. By them passes majority of passenger and goods transport between Poland and Ukraine. In 2003-2007 passenger traffic at Polish-Ukrainian border grew dynamically but in recent years it has decreased due to Polish accession to the Schengen Area and the introduction visas for Ukrainians, as well as the crisis in Ukraine.



Both surveyed cities have peripheral character. While Przemysl is the second largest city in the region (66 thousand inhabitants) and has some regional importance, Sambor (36 thousand inhabitants) has eminently local influence, finding itself in the shadow of a much larger city of Lviv.

Profile of the Italian-Tunisian Border Region

Raffaella Coletti

The Cross Border maritime area across Sicily and Tunisia is characterized by high natural diversity, which



includes arid landscapes, mountains, forests, grassy plains and a long coastline, where human activity is concentrated.



Distribution of GNP per capita on both sides of the border is very uneven, although Sicily's GDP remains well below the average of European and Italian Regions and Tunisian northern regions are more developed than internal and southern regions.

Infrastructure are developed, and they allow cross border cooperation and international exchange.

There are wide disparities between the southern Sicily's territories, where main economic activities are services and tourism, and northern shore of Tunisia, where industrial activity remains high, despite the predominance of services.



Key issues in the area are the following: fishing, also due to its environmental impact; agriculture and the agro-industry, both for its impact on employment and for the huge presence of Tunisian workers in the southern shore of Sicily; innovation and research in particular in the field of renewable energy; logistic system, that can offer development opportunities to the area due to its geographical position.

One of the most relevant and delicate issue is migration, due to the continuing flow of illegal migrants across the border, and particularly in Lampedusa.

From *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2011 edition – “On Islam and European Identity”

Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo

The year 2011 marks 13 centuries since General Tarik Ibn Ziyad disembarked on the Iberian Peninsula – and 13 centuries since Islam entered what we now consider to be Europe. This momentous event has passed unnoticed by the European press, but its non-celebration is of considerable significance within the present context of xenophobia and islamophobia that has been sweeping the European Union. These trends necessitate greater debate regarding the definition of European identity and the territorial limits of the EU as well as the arbitrary nature of such definitions.

During this year, a number of events have given cause for reflection about the socio-spatial foundations of European Union – in other words, about the role and symbolism of its external borders. Border geography again figures prominently in the process of European construction within which identity and space are two main pillars.

On May 8th of this year, the European Commission inaugurated the so-called “Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the South Mediterranean”(1). This announcement underscored, among other things, the necessity to create new “Mobility Partnerships” and proclaimed that in the short-term, the Commission will work with Member States on legal migration legislation and visa policy to support the goal of enhanced mobility, in particular for students, researchers and business persons” (2). The EU 27 thus appeared to be accepting important changes to the mobility regime in the Mediterranean. There was a sense that perhaps a new model of cross-border mobility might be possible that was more balanced and less asymmetric. Paradoxically, nevertheless, with the increase in immigrants arriving at the beaches of the European Union – and on the Island of Lampedusa – the EU in fact embarked on a trajectory of “rebordering”.

As the Arab Spring advanced, the external border control mechanisms that the EU had subcontracted to Libya and Tunisia broke down. Gripped by fear of the consequences of the Arab revolutions, a wave of re-nationalising and re-bordering anxiety swept over the chambers of government of several EU states. In April of this year the border hangover of the Arab Spring culminated in the French-Italian crisis at Ventimiglia. The consequences of this crisis exposed the complex relationship between the fortification of the EU’s external borders and the free circulation of people within the Schengen zone (3).

Given this scenario it is surprising to realise how little attention was paid by the media to a momentous date in time: 1300 years since the arrival of Tarik ibn Ziyad (and Islam) on the northern shores of the Mediterranean. This was in fact a key event that resonates in today’s Europe, as foundationalist claims to a socially and territorially pure notion of Europe are again in vogue. In 2011 we commemorate 13 centuries since Tarik ibn Ziyad disembarked at a place on the Straits between Spain and Morocco that bears the name Djebel Tarik, mountain of Tarik, or Gibraltar. Given the present situation, this anniversary is evocative not only for its historical importance but also for the obscurity to which European media have selectively condemned it.

The declarations of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik after his attacks in and near Oslo last July give evidence of a mission to save Europe from the influence of Islam. Breivik’s delusions also unmask the illusory foundations of xenophobic and islamophobic discourses, based as they are on notions of “purity”. Such discourses appeal to a clear-cut, unambiguous and absolute definition of Europe’s spatial limits and its identity. However, an observation of the physical limits of Europe combined by a critical reading of almost forgotten but crucial historical episodes such as Tarik’s arrival to “Europe” help paint a different picture – a picture that is less static, more open and not as arbitrary.

A commemoration of Tarik’s disembarkation on the Iberian peninsula provides the opportunity to revisit a part of Gibraltar’s geography that is charged with extraordinary geopolitical symbolism. On the southern side of this “British Overseas Territory” we find level ground known as Europa Point. Only a few kilometres from Africa, at the southernmost tip of the European continent, Europa Point offers the rich dialectical panorama of Muslim and Christian houses of worship: the Mosque of Ibrahim al Ibrahim and the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Europe.

The Mosque of Ibrahim al Ibrahim, also known as the King Fahd bin Abdulaziz al-Saud Mosque or the Mosque of the Custodian of the Two Holy, was built in 1997. The faithful who visit this site of worship are primarily Moroccan workers and their family members who settled in Gibraltar, substituting Spanish workers, after General Franco closed the border with Spain in 1969. On the other side, the Shrine of Our Lady of Europe is the church where the Virgin of Europe, the patron saint of Gibraltar, is worshipped. Earlier on this same spot there was a small mosque built in the 14th Century but that was converted into a Christian church with the Reconquista.

Facing Gibraltar, on the other side of the Mediterranean, is the Autonomous City of Ceuta which constitutes a veritable challenge to continental obstructionism with regard to the tricky question of future EU enlargements. From here, a fragment of the EU on African soil, the Virgin of Africa (the Catholic patron saint of Ceuta) complicates and thus enriches the landscape of Europa Point. From here, Tarik departed 13 centuries ago for Gibraltar in order to complete his journey between Abyla and Calpe, the two "Columns of Hercules". The visual dialogue that emerges between the Mosque of Ibrahim al Ibrahim and the Shrine of our Lady of Europe (and that is enlivened by the transmediterranean image of the Sanctuary of the Virgen of Africa) constructs a physical and symbolic profile of Europa Point. This visual dialogue gives evidence of the social and spatial complexity that extends across the borders of Europe: it is a scene of cultural and continental interrelationships.

The 1300 years that have passed since the arrival of Tarik and Islam on the Iberian Peninsula provide an occasion to ask questions such as: where does Europe end? Where are the physical and symbolic borders of the European Union and what is their purpose?

Recently, old and new debates have proliferated with regard to the Europeaness of Islam, the Christianity of Europe, the Africaness of the European Union and the European's of Africa. It seems nevertheless evident that arriving at a consensus on where Europe exactly begins and ends or as to what is "European identity" is much like the labours of Sisyphus. Particularly since the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York - their 10th anniversary were recently commemorated with quiet solemnity - the desire to achieve or regain power, national identity and control over territory has gained new followers in ultranationalist circles and parties of the extreme right (5). Considered "suspicious" after the terrorist attacks of New York (2001), Madrid (2004) and London (2005), Muslims were swept into the eye of the hurricane by political discourses of a "War against Terrorism". Within the European Union Huntingtonian discourses of cultural-civilisational difference (6) and distinctions as to what is and what is not "European" have gained ground in political debate (7). Within this context, the contemporary (re)construction of the Muslim "Other" has colonised political debate.

On a European scale the politics of difference with regard to Muslims has developed along two distinct but interrelated fronts: on is the debate about the territorial limits of the European integration project, the other concerns debate centred on immigration and cultural-religious diversity within Europe. In this way, the ongoing negotiation of Turkish EU membership is

seen by some as a threat to the Christian roots of European identity; this notion of threat is complemented by controversies over everyday practices, such as the use of the veil or the construction of mosques. In other words, not only do we see fear and mistrust of Islam outside the borders of the EU, but also a similar fear and mistrust directed at Muslim communities living within the EU as well. Furthermore, the Muslim "Other" far from the perimeters of the EU is often used to justify the present borders of membership. At the same time, the Muslim "Other" within the EU serves as a symbolic internal border of European identity.

Given this situation, the remembrance of the 1300th anniversary of Tarik's arrival to Gibraltar is more than mere commemoration; it offers a direct connection to the history of socio-spatial purification that took place during the so-called Reconquista of the Catholic Kings. In the Spanish context, said narratives of purification were official doctrine during a good part of the 20th Century. Presently, political groups such as the Plataforma per Catalunya (a party that defines itself on questions of identity) base their ideologies on a rejection of foreign immigration and thus add new vigour to the old purification discourse.

The refusal to ignore momentous events in history such as that of Tarik's disembarkation help us remember how fanciful the quest for a pure European space and identity really is. In other words, commemorations such as these contribute to remind us of the fickle nature and volatility of European "essence". They also help us to expose unsustainable and arbitrary attempts to make the EU's borders physically and symbolically impermeable.

(1) COM (2011) 200 final, 8/III/2011

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/fule/docs/news/joint_communication-a_partnership_for_democracy_and_shared_prosperity_with_south_med_en.pdf

(2) See (1)

(3) Bialasiewicz, L. (2011), Borders, above all? Political Geography 30:299-300.

(4) El País, Madrid, 23 de Julio de 2011

(5) Van Houtum H. (2010), Human blacklisting: the global apartheid of the EU's external border regime. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 28(6) 957 - 976

(6) Huntington, Samuel P. (1993), The Clash of Civilizations? Foreign Affairs. Volume 72, No. 3

(7) Scott, J.; Van Houtum, H. (2009), Reflections on EU territoriality and the 'bordering' of Europe, Political Geography, Volume 28, Issue 5, June, p. 271-273.

Upcoming events:

* **The EUBORDERREGIONS Workshop 3 and the Conference will be held in Budapest, May 8-13, 2012.**

Observe the information via www.euborderregions.eu.

* **II workshop of Economics of Mediterranean in Barcelona, June 26-27, 2012.**

The main objective of the Workshop is to provide a forum for interaction between researchers, policy makers, and interested parties to present and discuss their research on issues identified under the various themes regarding economies and the economic impacts on development in the Mediterranean countries.

* **2012 European ABS Conference takes place in Lisbon, September 12-15, 2012**

Following the 2010 European Conference of the Association for Borderland Studies held in Veria, Greece, we are pleased to welcome the 2012 Conference in Portugal. The focus of this conference is to bring together researchers and academics who work in the borders issues, as well as social actors, politicians and institutions that are directly (and daily) involved in cross-border co-operation, implementing projects and solving problems, providing therefore a broad and multidisciplinary discussion. We invite you to submit your abstracts and to attend in order to share your achievements in these research fields. The deadline for submitting abstracts is JANUARY 15th, 2012. For further information: <http://bordersandborderlands2012.weebly.com/>

* **Border Regions in Transition Conference XII in November 2012 in East Asia**

First two days of the symposium will be held in the city of Fukuoka, Japan, followed by a field trip to Tsushima, a border island, on day three. On day four the symposium will conclude in Busan, Korea. Also, November is an ideal month for viewing sumo, Japanese traditional wrestling, in the city. With local support, program will be realized an epoch-making event, especially in cooperation with distinguished Eurasian border researchers and with institutions from Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, China and Russia. With the cooperation of the border cities of Fukuoka and Busan, the first East Asian BRIT will truly be a historic event. For further information: <http://www.borderstudies.jp/brit2012/about.html>.

* **ABS - Membership**

The Association for Borderlands Studies is the leading international scholarly association dedicated exclusively to the systematic interchange of ideas and information relating to international border areas. Founded in 1976 the Association has expanded its membership around the world. It encompasses an interdisciplinary membership of scholars at more than one hundred academic, governmental institutions, and NGOs representing the Americas, Asia, Africa and Europe.

If you are a social scientist, a government official or NGO employee with an interest in borders, boundaries, frontiers and borderland studies, you may apply for membership in the Association. The Association publishes the *Journal of Borderlands Studies (JBS)*, which presents leading research on border issues, and organizes the ABS annual meeting which provides a scholarly forum for a wide range of topics on border regions around the world. JBS is a thrice-yearly publication, with a spring, summer and fall number. All JBS publications are double blind peer reviewed articles, and book reviews. Once or twice yearly, a number may include a group of articles on a given theme.

JBS is now accessible online – that is over 280 papers available to our members. For further information: <http://uvic.ca/borderlands>

Membership follows the calendar year (January to December). Membership fees may be paid online with a major credit card and are collected in Canadian dollars. Online payment receipts are provided by reply email. Fees are as follows: \$65 for regular memberships and \$25 for student memberships. If you are unable to pay by credit card, you may send a cheque or bank draft in Canadian dollars payable to the University of Victoria.

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